



The Foreign Agricultural Service 1953-2003

During 2003, the Foreign Agricultural Service is celebrating its 50th anniversary. This special issue of *AgExporter* highlights the evolution of FAS as it strives to build new markets for U.S. farmers and ranchers, improve the competitive position of U.S. agriculture in the global marketplace and enhance world food security.

Although a relatively small agency in the overall USDA structure, FAS plays a crucial role in promoting the prosperity of the U.S. agricultural economy. From its beginnings in March 1953, FAS has bolstered U.S. agricultural exports to where they are now—more than \$50 billion annually. Over the past five decades, FAS has opened dynamic new markets for U.S. foods, developed enduring relationships with private sector organizations, sent agricultural attachés to foreign nations to represent U.S. interests, created credit solutions to facilitate the purchase of U.S. products and supplied food and technical assistance to developing countries around the world.

In this 21st century, FAS will continue to provide critical functions to U.S. agriculture. The major services of FAS—market information, access and development; trade policy formulation and monitoring; food aid; and international linkages—will only gain in importance in the years ahead as U.S. food and agricultural exporters work to overcome international barriers and succeed in world markets. FAS' global market efforts also help foster economic growth, reduce poverty and greatly enhance food security around the world.

Congratulations to FAS on its 50th anniversary for the work it has done and continues to do to ensure that our exporters have the necessary tools to capture a greater share of the benefits that are flowing from trade reform and global market expansion.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ann Veneman'.

Ann M. Veneman
Secretary of Agriculture